

CIA Has Secret Army Of 100,000, Panel Told

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WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency has built clandestine armies numbering 100,000 in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia, an expert on Southeast Asia told a congressional panel Tuesday.

"It's the CIA's foreign legion," said Fred Branfman, a former member of the International Volunteer Services and a free-lance reporter in Laos.

The armies, controlled and paid for by the CIA, Branfman said, include native tribesmen, Thais, Nationalist Chinese and other Asians. Their job is to harass the population and troops in Communist-controlled areas of Indochina, except North Vietnam. Presumably they would continue their fighting with American supplies and money after American forces are withdrawn, he said.

BRANFMAN'S charges were the closest thing to hard news at the opening of a three-day seminar on the Pentagon papers, sponsored by 17 members of Congress. The generally repetitive discussion showed that the leak of the Pentagon papers themselves is a difficult act to follow.

Rep. John Dow (D., N.Y.), chairman of the three-day event, said that Daniel Ellsberg would join the group today. Ellsberg, one of the authors of the 47-volume study, has acknowledged passing portions of the docu-



Rep. Dow
... heads panel

ment to the press, for which he has been indicted by a federal grand jury.

Only one author of the Pentagon papers, Melvin Gurtov of Santa Monica, appeared at the conference Tuesday. But he added little to what is already known.

GURTOV, WHO last month was forced to resign as a researcher at the Rand Corp. because of his anti-war sentiment and his association with Ellsberg, told the panel that almost no-one in government had read the Pentagon papers, including the man who commissioned them, former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, until they were published in the press.

He noted, in response to a question, that the Pentagon study shows the intelligence analysts of the CIA, but not the field operatives, "in a good light."

The CIA analysts, he said,

questioned basic assumptions, like the theory that if Vietnam fell to the Communists the rest of Southeast Asia would fall like dominoes. They also criticized the effectiveness of American bombing, Gurtov said.

"But when their reports, like others, challenged basic assumptions," Gurtov said, "they were ignored."

Branfman, talking about the CIA's role in Southeast Asia, said it "exercises functional control of military operations in Laos" and other Southeast Asian countries outside of Vietnam. In Laos it is conducting a campaign of "terrorism" in Communist held areas.

NGO VINH Long, a South Vietnamese now studying at Harvard, said the Pentagon papers disclose that American war planners had no understanding of the Vietnamese people, their aspirations, problems, and nationalism.

"For them the Vietnamese didn't exist except as Communists or anti-Communists," he said.

And he suggested that administrative overtures to mainland China in hopes it would help impose a settlement of the war on North Vietnam indicates that the United States still does not understand that any settlement "must come with the Vietnamese people," by which he meant the Communists and the Saigon regime.

Tran Van Dinh, former South Vietnamese ambassa-

dor to the United States, traced American involvement in his country from May 1854, when Marines landed there to free an imprisoned French missionary.

"I DON'T plead for Americans to understand the Vietnamese," he said. "Americans should understand America first. In 1945, when we thought we won our independence by defeating the Japanese, we believed in this country and that it would help us. Ho Chi Minh had faith in America. But we didn't understand about your Indian wars, and the suppression of the revolts in the Philippines.

"In the past years we have been trying to find out what America is all about, and so far we don't know."

Others at the conference included Anthony Russo, a former Rand employee now facing contempt charges for refusing to testify about the leak of the Pentagon papers; Noam Chomsky, a linguist whose books on American policies helped convert Ellsberg, and David Truong, whose father ran second in the South Vietnamese presidential elections in 1967 and subsequently was imprisoned.